

which can check-out, as described later). Even in the event that there has been check-out of the contents to the number of times indicated in the rights information, the personal computer 1 is capable of playing the contents.

Also, the rights information indicates that the contents can be copied. In the event that the contents are copied to the portable devices 5-1 through 5-3, the personal computer 1 is still capable of playing the contents recorded therein. The number of times that the contents can be recorded to the portable devices 5-1 through 5-3 may be restricted. In this case, the number of times that copies can be made never increases.

Also, the rights information indicates whether the contents can be moved to another personal computer, and so forth. After the contents are moved to the portable devices 5-1 through 5-3, the contents recorded in the personal computer 1 cannot be used any more (either the contents are deleted, or the rights information is changed so that the contents are no longer usable).

Or, the rights information indicates that, following moving the contents from a recording medium to the personal computer 1, only check-out or check-in is permitted (so-called importing). Contents imported from memory cards 9-1 through 9-4 to the personal computer 1 are permitted to be, for example, checked-out to the portable devices 5-1 through

5-3, but moving the contents to another personal computer or the memory cards 9-1 through 9-4 is not permitted.

Details of rights information will be described later.

The personal computer 1 stores the contents which are recorded in an encrypted state along with the data relating to the contents (i.e., music piece title, playing conditions, etc.) to the portable device 5-1 that is connected thereto via a USB (Universal Serial Bus) cable, and also updates the rights information corresponding to the stored contents in accordance with the storing of the contents in the portable device 5-1 (hereafter referred to as "check-out"). More specifically, in the event of check-out, the number of times that check-out can be performed in the rights information corresponding to the contents recorded in the personal computer 1 is decremented by 1. When the number of times that check-out can be made reaches zero, the corresponding contents cannot be checked-out.

The personal computer 1 stores the contents which are recorded in an encrypted state along with the data relating to the contents to the portable device 5-2 that is connected thereto via a USB cable, and also updates the rights information corresponding to the stored contents in accordance with the storing of the contents in the portable device 5-2. The personal computer 1 stores the contents which are recorded in an encrypted state along with the data

relating to the contents to the portable device 5-3 that is connected thereto via a USB cable, and also updates the rights information corresponding to the stored contents in accordance with the storing of the contents in the portable device 5-3.

Also, the personal computer 1 causes the portable device 5-1 connected thereto via a USB cable to delete (or render unusable) the contents which the personal computer 1 has checked-out to the portable device 5-1, and updates the rights information corresponding to the deleted contents (hereafter referred to as "check-in"). More specifically, at the time of check-in, the number of times that check-out can be performed in the rights information corresponding to the contents recorded in the personal computer 1 is incremented by 1.

The personal computer 1 causes the portable device 5-2 connected thereto via a USB cable to delete (or render unusable) the contents which the personal computer 1 has checked-out to the portable device 5-2, and updates the rights information corresponding to the deleted contents. The personal computer 1 causes the portable device 5-3 connected thereto via a USB cable to delete (or render unusable) the contents which the personal computer 1 has checked-out to the portable device 5-3, and updates the rights information corresponding to the deleted contents.